

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-29 are pending in the present application. Claims 6 and 20 have been amended. Claims 1, 12, 14, and 24 are independent claims.

Claim Amendments Related to Matters of Form

Applicants respectfully submit that a Notice of Appeal was filed on June 17, 2004. In preparation for filing the Appeal Brief, Applicants wish to have the above claim amendments entered to correct certain matters of form.

Claim 6 has been amended to correct a typographical error by replacing “vitual path” with “virtual path” in line 2. It will be clear to the Examiner upon review of the present application that the claimed invention is directed to the assignment of virtual paths in a network. See, e.g., Specification at page 2: lines 9-16. Applicants further submit that the Examiner has previously interpreted the above feature in claim 6 as a virtual path, for purposes of examination. See final Office Action (02/17/2004) at page 4. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that this amendment is only related to matters of form, and does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration.

Claim 20 has been amended to merely correct a typographical error by replacing “inter-ring management channel” with “intra-ring management channel” in lines 2 and 5. As will be evident to the Examiner upon review, the present application clearly discloses that management information is exchanged over an intra-ring management channel. See, e.g., Specification at page 5: lines 10-18. It

is further respectfully submitted that the present application does not disclose an "inter-ring management channel." Thus, it will be clear that the inclusion of "inter-ring management channel" in claim 20 was merely a typographical error. Furthermore, it is respectfully submitted that this amendment does not affect the interpretation of claim 20, which was applied by the Examiner for examination purposes. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that this amendment relates only to matters of form, and does not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration.

Conclusion

Entry of this Amendment After Final is respectfully requested. It is respectfully submitted that the above claim amendments only correct matters of form. As such, the amendments place the application in better form for appeal, without raising any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration.

It is further respectfully requested that the Examiner provide Applicants with an Advisory Action as soon as possible to indicate that these amendments have been entered, so that Applicants can prepare the Appeal Brief accordingly.

Should the Examiner believe that a telephone interview is necessary to expedite prosecution of the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Jason W. Rhodes (Reg. No. 47,305) at the telephone number of the undersigned.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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